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PRESSURE GROWS ON THE POPE TO RESIGN

In a stunning and beautiful letter, thousands of Catholic women are pleading with Pope Francis to break his silence on the charges leveled by Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, who alleged that the pope knew of Cardinal McCarrick's abuses and predatory nature, but elevated him instead of sanctioning him or turning him over to authorities.

The letter, originally signed by 53 seminary professors, consecrated women, theologians, missionaries, and mothers of the Church, implores:

Our hearts are broken, our faith tested, by the escalating crisis engulfing our beloved Church. We are angry, betrayed and disillusioned. The pain and suffering of the victims never ends, as each news cycle brings more horrific revelations of sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, cover-ups, and deceit—even at the Church's highest levels.

The letter goes on to state very clearly the most pressing matter for most Catholics right now:

Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò's recent statement impels us to reach out to you directly for answers. His testimony accuses you, Holy Father, and highly placed cardinals of turning a blind eye to former Cardinal McCarrick's egregious behavior, and promoting this predator as a global spokesman and spiritual leader. Is this true?



Pope Francis refused to comment on Viganò's charge, saying only, "I read the statement this morning, and I must tell you sincerely that, I must say this, to you and all those who are interested: Read the statement carefully and make your own judgment. I will not say a single word on this."

This non-response bewildered faithful Catholics everywhere who feel it's far past time to break the silence surrounding the sexual abuse and cover-ups plaguing the Church. The Catholic women go on to chastise the pope for so flippantly ignoring their sincere desire to understand the truth:

To your hurting flock, Pope Francis, your words are inadequate. They sting, reminiscent of the clericalism you so recently condemned. We need leadership, truth, and transparency. We, your flock, deserve your answers now.

The women go on to agree with Cardinal DiNardo, who called for an investigation into Viganò's claims. The letter pulls no punches in detailing what needs to be answered, and quickly.

The women explained:

Specifically, we humbly implore you to answer the following questions, as the answers are surely known to you. Archbishop Viganò says that in June 2013 he conveyed to you this message (in essence) about then-Cardinal McCarrick:

"He corrupted generations of seminarians and priests and Pope Benedict ordered him to withdraw to a life of prayer and penance."

Is this true? What did Archbishop Viganò convey to you in June 2013 about then-Cardinal McCarrick?

When did you learn of any allegations of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct with adults by then-Cardinal McCarrick?

When did you learn of Pope Benedict's restrictions on then-Cardinal McCarrick?

Did you release then-Cardinal McCarrick from any of Pope Benedict's restrictions?

Kathryn Jean Lopez, senior fellow at the National Review Institute and editor-at-large of National Review magazine, is one of the original signers of the letter. "The desire was to write to the Holy Father as women who love the Church and her doctrine -- and love him, too," she told PJM. "As someone who tries to read all of his sermons and everything else as best as I can, he frequently talks about the importance of acknowledging sin, bringing darkness to light. It's all part of the Christian journey."

Embattled Pope Francis 'Has No Intention' of Stepping Down and Is 'Embittered' by Viganò Letter

Lopez left room for misunderstanding of the pope's non-response. "His non-answer answer on the plane back from Ireland the other day was consistent with his style: I think he sees himself as the father who is insisting on all of the fights in the Church happening in daylight for all to see, rather than theological silos," she explained. "But people are confused and that letter is [written by] daughters of the Church -- and many of them seminary professors and women who work in the care and spiritual, intellectual, human formation, [and the] feeding of seminarians and priests -- begging the pope for help here." Sponsored

When Lopez was interviewed on CBSN this morning, only the original 52 women had signed the letter. A few hours later that number has grown to over 4,000 -- and it continues to climb. Lopez says the letter is being sent to the pope and the "women who love the Church and her teachings and seek and live to serve Christ with love who are walking with a lot of devastated Catholics on the sacramental journey and really long for answers."

They are hoping to get them from the Holy Father.

Lopez invites all Catholic women who agree to sign the letter and lend their support to the victims of clerical sexual abuse.

We are wives, mothers, single women, consecrated women, and religious sisters.

We are the mothers and sisters of your priests, seminarians, future priests and religious. We are the Church's lay leaders, and the mothers of the next generation.

We are professors in your seminaries, and leaders in Catholic chanceries and institutions.

We are theologians, evangelists, missionaries and founders of Catholic apostolates.

We are the people who sacrifice to fund the Church's good work.

We are the backbone of Catholic parishes, schools, and dioceses.

We are the hands, the feet, and the heart of the Church.

In short, we are the Church, every bit as much as the cardinals and bishops around you.

Holy Father, we are the "incisive presence" the Church needs, and we need your answers.